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ABSTRACT

Reading programs and instructional facilities of 25 middle, junior high and senior high schools in various socio-economic settings of Arizona, California, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin were visited to identify those which hold promise. Observations revealed: (1) that more than half maintain a reading center or lab--some elaborate, others very modest, (2) that modular scheduling and team teaching represent variations in the organizational plan of a number of schools, (3) that commercial contracts, behavior modification strategies, and differentiated staffing are incorporated to some extent in these programs, (4) that all programs valued and attempted to provide a variety of types and levels of instructional materials, and (5) that reading personnel attempt to involve subject matter teachers in strengthening students' reading skills. (The paper concludes with a list of numerous characteristics of and objectives for an ideal reading program at the secondary level.) (RD)

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STRENGTHENING READING AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

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Listen to comments about reading made by some teen-agers, secondary school students. These observations were abstracted from discussions of the importance of reading and learning to read.

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Student A "Reading is the greatest; I just want to be able to read more and more!"

Student B "I long to learn new things, and I get most of my ideas from reading."

Student C "You just gotta learn to read better to succeed in school."

Student D "Sometimes I think I'm just dumb; I can't keep up with all the reading in class."

The significance of reading is echoed by professionals who variously describe reading as "essential to learning," "the avenue to education," and "the basis for functional scholarship as well as lifetime learning."

Such assertions aptly describe the depth of conviction being expressed by millions of youth today, both successful and less successful, in relation to reading. The same degree of intensity is reflected by teachers and parents of these youth who support the high level of importance ascribed to reading competency at all educational levels.

NEED FOR SECONDARY READING INSTRUCTION

Approximately fifteen million young people attend Middle Schools, Junior and Senior High Schools in America today. These youth face an unparalleled range of reading materials related to today's information explosion. Although films, recordings, radio, television and video-tapes share responsibility for imparting information, books and printed materials

remain the major vehicle for learning. As citizens and as workers for tomorrow students also face life in a technological society oriented to rapidly expanding knowledge of the universe which almost defies comprehension. With the thrust to understand the entire universe, the need to read in order to stay abreast of developments becomes more imperative. Augmented knowledge about the individual self coupled with the desire of educators to assist individuals to identify and understand personal roles in the social structure underscores the significance of developing skill in reading for each learner.

Need for effective communication seems to be constantly increasing. Persons of all ages express desire to consistently improve language competencies of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Today's world has been described as a reading world which would call for increased attention to effective development of the reading process. The plethora of materials for reading which challenge the reader today might be represented by the range from skywriting to billboards to computer printout to newspapers, magazines, and books. These are only representative since scope and types of reading material as well as quantity increases annually.

Recognition has been given to the importance of reading at the secondary level for a number of years. As early as 1925, the National Society for the Study of Education boldly

proposed in its Twenty-fourth Yearbook (10) that reading guidance be provided at Junior and Senior High School Levels. Thirty-five years later NSSE, with four Yearbooks now devoted to reading instruction, observed trends toward expanded programs of reading instruction for Junior and Senior High School students and for college students and adults as well. Emphasis in 1961 was placed chiefly on remedial and corrective work, although some schools had adopted broader approaches. Some teachers of subjects other than reading had assumed responsibility for aiding in the development and application of reading skills. The late David Russell observed that the title of this volume, Development In and Through Reading, (11) assumes some sort of continuous process of development which is recognized as a lifetime affair.

Through the last decade authors have accepted as basic the recognition that in high schools each teacher carries responsibility to teach those reading skills pertinent to his subject area. (7) Certain aspects of every subject matter lend themselves to practice in overcoming reading handicaps and in strengthening skill in the vital area of reading. Reading is no longer thought of in terms of word perception and comprehension only but must also involve the high school student in reaction and integration as well. (9) Stimuli for reading today calls for the adolescent to read out of school as well as in school. This dimension of reading implies

teaching students how to read as well as helping each acquire skills in knowing what to read to satisfy needs. Thus the process of growing up, the teen age years, the weighty decisions being made, and the challenging tasks of daily life underline motivations for reading that go beyond those experienced at the earlier levels of school.

STATUS OF SECONDARY READING

The National Center for Educational Statistics reported on specialized instruction in 21,000 public secondary schools. (13) In the fall, 1968, eighty-six percent of these schools indicated one or more pupils with a reading problem. Eighty-one percent of the schools reporting pupils with reading problems had specialized reading instruction available. This specialized instruction was provided in separate classes only in fifty-four percent of the schools, in one fourth of the schools specialized reading instruction was provided in both separate and regular classes, in the remainder instruction was provided in regular classes only. Staff for specialized reading instruction numbered about half that for librarians, one-fourth of the guidance counselors, and one-sixth the number of physical education teachers. Evidence indicates that more than thirty percent of the public secondary schools did not have reading services to help pupils, while a substantial number of schools that report some access to specialized reading instruction may provide services that are woefully inadequate.

Compared with specialized instruction for pupils experiencing difficulty in reading, the number of schools at the secondary level with planned developmental reading programs for all or the majority of pupils is even smaller. In addition, authors like Applebee (1) who conducted a national study of high school English programs in 1966 have expressed concern over findings that class time apportioned to teaching reading was less than five percent.

CURRENT READING PROGRAMS

In an effort to ascertain the extent and types of programs at secondary level that appear to hold promise, visitations and observations were planned in 25 schools beyond the elementary level (Middle Schools, Junior and Senior High Schools). Schools were identified in Arizona, California, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Settings ranged from a school for continuation students and adults in a warehouse to programs designed to serve pupils of varied socio-economic levels. Some programs were in inner city settings while others were in privileged suburban locations. It would appear that reading programs should be planned in relation to the settings in which they are to be implemented. A number of factors observed appear to influence the reading program, and the following seem most significant in terms of schools observed:

Facilities -- A Reading Center or Lab was found in more than half of the schools observed. These ranged from quite elaborate and well-equipped facilities to some very modest. Corrective and remedial programs dominated most of the time. One school had a lab deemed outstanding that was not being used, another featured an open concept reading center without walls and open to hallways and adjoining library and study areas. (3)

Resource rooms where students work on both the reading process of learning and content related to a subject were featured in four schools. Some were directed by teachers, some staffed by aides, and others had a combination of personnel.

One school had a room designated as a Communications Laboratory. One junior high school included Experience Rooms in addition to a Learning Center (housed with the library) which was extensive and impressive and seemed to be serving students effectively. (15)

Organizational Pattern -- Variations in organizational plan took the form of Modular Scheduling in a number of schools. This modular pattern allows opportunities to vary amount of time spent with content, process, direct presentation, or study in any subject area and may hold promise for reading improvement. Three schools had some form of Team Teaching. Teams varied from two regular

teachers, to a combination of a reading teacher-English teacher-aide, to a reading teacher-typing teacher teaming to add the modalities involved in typing to learning to read.

Some schools have allocated a portion of the responsibility for teaching reading to a commercial contractor. Variability in the extent of the contract and the types of programs being implemented was noted. Two contractors combined reading and math programs with a motivational strategy while another implemented a speed reading course urging seventh graders to learn to read eight books in an hour.

Instructional Strategies -- The most obvious innovations in instruction were evidenced in behavior modification programs. One used a point system with opportunity to exchange points for food and cokes, baseballs, gloves, cosmetic kits, or radios in an effort to change responses of a group of "disturbed" pupils in grade seven. Opportunity for time in an activity room was the reward in two programs.

The degree of contact between teachers and learners was a variable of significant magnitude in the schools visited. In some schools the entire program was implemented through regular English teachers working with pupils in less academic sections. In other schools a

reading person and English teachers worked with pupils. Reading teachers were solely responsible for the major portion of the reading program in several schools. Total involvement of all teachers was a prime aim of one project. (16) In seven schools paraprofessionals worked in part of the reading program. A peer-tutorial program, where pupils from grade nine worked with those in grade seven, was in operation in one school with reported success. Community volunteers worked with pupils two hours per week in another school. (17)

Independent activities where learners worked "on their own" with materials were being used extensively in the programs observed.

Materials -- Provision of varied materials in terms of types and levels was a declared objective of all programs observed. One school characterized its program as using Diversified Materials. A number of programs utilized specialized materials such as Words in Color, Programmed Reading, and Specific Skills materials. The Newspaper in the Classroom approach was employed in both junior and senior high schools.

Utilization of materials was determined through a Diagnostic-Prescriptive approach in one school, and three schools used a Systems Organization of materials. Independent Learning Packages were available in two schools.

Reading in Content Areas -- Reading personnel are making efforts in a number of schools to involve teachers of various subjects in helping to strengthen reading for their area. In one school a program was in the planning phase (an important initial step). Workshops for subject teachers were held by the Reading Co-ordinator in one high school. The project of Individually Prescribed Study in Specific Content Areas seemed to have promise. Two schools provided time for reading personnel to work with content teachers in planning for strengthening the reading component. In one school the Reading Coordinator implemented a rather thorough program across multiple disciplines and offered professional growth courses for secondary teachers. (12) This seems to be one of the most promising directions being pursued.

GOALS FOR SECONDARY READING

Recognition of needs still existant among schools making promising efforts in the area of reading calls for consideration of change. Awareness that the roles of the reading teacher and subject area teachers influence the acquisition of skills and the evolving concept of self in relation to academic success emphasizes needed change toward improvement. To alter the current picture necessitates recognition by the school of the basic significance of reading and willingness to

give priority for reading on the part of teachers, administrators, parents and students. The reading program toward which schools strive would be characterized by the following features:

1. The Developmental Reading Program is part of the total developmental educative process from beginning to terminal years of schooling.

2. Carefully designed behavioral objectives and goals guide the program toward fulfilling needs of students in relation to reading fluency, flexibility, and accuracy, as well as critical and creative reading.

3. Diagnostic evidence from careful appraisal of reading abilities and needs is used to determine individual study plans.

4. Help is planned on a preventive basis.

5. Students are scheduled into manageable groupings.

6. The structure of the program is flexible so that students may move and progress as needs indicate.

7. Students are given assistance in how to study each subject most effectively, and use related reference resources.

8. Leadership and coordination of the program involve persons thoroughly prepared in reading who have a special feeling for learners.

9. The reading committee includes the administration, faculty, guidance personnel, librarian, students and parents in planning and implementation.

10. The program includes formulation and carrying out research to identify promising practices and helpful materials for reading instruction as well as keeping abreast of findings from other researchers.

Consistency and continuity are key features of the program sought. The facilities for implementing the program will be adequate and effectively utilized. Space designated specifically for the reading improvement program will be ample and designed for variable uses involving both groups and individuals. Other space within the school will be organized and arranged for contribution to the reading development program-this includes library, study spaces, large group facilities, and small conference rooms for use by one or two students and instructors. Facilities will be arranged and modified as need emerges.

Materials would be extensive. Not only would great variety be found in reading rooms but a wide range of reading selections at different readability levels would be available for use in conjunction with units or topics in each subject.

In an ideal program reading personnel would have competencies and preparation in working directly with students and also in working with professional faculty to strengthen reading and instructional procedures. In fact, in this school faculty in reading would be identifiable not because they handle exclusively the teaching of reading, because all teachers

would contribute to growth in reading, but because they would provide the expertise in aiding others to perceive more adequately the role of reading. The content-process dilemma encountered so often would have been resolved in this school. Teachers through participation in pre-service and in-service education would have arrived at combinations of instructional strategies that provide for improvement of reading and study skills in relation to mastering the content of the subjects being taught. Procedures followed would be so coordinated that teachers in one academic discipline would offer learning experiences to augment success in another, both faculty and learners would be able to perceive interrelationships and capitalize on them.

Experiences to foster reading and reading improvement would be made available in a wide variety of forms and settings. The more organized experiences offered through class structures would be supplemented by opportunities to strengthen reading for some students in the library setting, for others through a series of voluntary exposures to reading, for some on a very independent basis through a systems approach, and for others the possibility of choosing a continuing contact with the teacher, tutor, paraprofessional or peer helper. The curricular experiences in reading would be spiral in nature utilizing the diagnostic-teaching-learning sequence that allow student and teacher to use evidence from diagnostic evaluations to identify teaching-learning strategies and in turn evaluate progress from the

learning activity to provide a basis for the next steps in the instructional program. A noteworthy feature of this spiral of learning is that it is conceived as a broad band rather than a single strand. The band includes the possibility of a range of types of learning activities at each level or phase, a range of types of materials to achieve specific goals, and potential for interlinking-interrelating experiences that allow growth in a given skill to emerge for one individual out of research in history while for another it may develop through study of industrial arts.

Recognizing the centrality of reading to academic learning and increasing complexity of reading demands at each succeeding educational level, the program will involve no deterring features in terms of time. This means that assistance for improvement in reading will be available to students who desire it throughout the school day, throughout the academic year and the calendar year, with summers providing the opportunity for students to participate in special programs, to seek challenge or enrichment.

The staff of this reading program is future-oriented, willing to examine and explore the use of novel and innovative ideas in improving the teaching of reading and the achievement of study skills. They are also now-oriented, ready to bring into practice in their school setting those procedures which vitalize reading and learning activities for all pupils.

LEARN TO READ TO LEARN

The coupling of reality of the individual school program with concepts of the ideal needs to be made to achieve the Right to Read for the pupils in the secondary schools in which reading is taught. Teachers need preparation to meet the challenge of students who read at a wide range of levels and who need to develop advanced skills in reading. This may mean that teacher education should incorporate work in reading education for secondary teaching candidates at both graduate and undergraduate levels. Additional trained reading specialists with interests beyond the elementary schools are certainly desired to act as coordinators, consultants and leaders in formulating and implementing programs. Both publishers and writers can assist in contributing reading resources being asked for by teachers in all subject areas that will provide learning opportunities for all rather than part of their students. Service to a larger number and a broader range of secondary students through strengthening of developmental programs at this level so that youth may learn to read to learn can be viewed as providing expanded opportunities for today's scholars and tomorrow's citizens.

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